(c) The names of units engaged in the production of nitrogenous and phosphatic fertilizers are given in the Annexure attached [See Appendix CLIII, Annexure No. 47]

(d) The main purpose of the retention price and subsidy scheme is to make fertilizers available at reasonable prices to the farmers in order to encourage agricultural production, to maintain reasonable ratio between the prices of fertilizers and of foodgrains to protect the interests of the indigenous manufacturers by assuring them a reasonable return on their investment, to induce manufacture of fertilizers in the country and thereby to reduce dependence on imports and consequently, outgo of foreign exchange. As far as possible, the retention price and subsidy scheme has been structured to prevent misuse.

(e) to (f) In November, 1989, Planning Commission constituted an Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Shri B. B. Singh, Member, Appellate Authority for BIFR to go into the entire gamut of fertilizer subsidy, pricing etc.

(g) and (h) With a view to reducing the subsidy burden, higher norms of capacity utilisation and longer period of depreciation were notified with effect from 1.4.1988.

Increase in the prices of dals

*173. DR. RATNAKAR PANDEY: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the prices of dals have gone up further during the recent months;

(b) if so, the average prevailing price of each type of dal both wholesale and retail during November and December, 1989 and during January and February, 1990; and

(c) the steps taken to keep these prices under control?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA): (a) The prices of dals have generally remained steady since November, 1989.

(b) Statements I and II indicating the required information is laid on the Table of the House. [See Appendix CLIII, Annexure No. 48]

(c) Government is regularly reviewing the prices, necessary measures are being taken to increase production of pulses in the country. Their availability is also being augmented by imports. The custom duty on pulses was reduced from 35 per cent to 10 per cent from 1-11-1989 so that the prices of indigenous pulses are also brought down.

Improvement in the volume of goods traffic during the 7th Five Year Plan period

*174. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the volume of goods traffic, handled by the Railways, has registered steady improvement during the 7th Five Year Plan period;

(b) if so, whether the said increase in the volume of freight handling by the Railways was achieved by any major investment in the capital assets and/or maintenance during the last five years; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The increase in volume of traffic was achieved partly through investments in additional capital assets and in rehabilitation of existing assets and partly through optimisation in utilisation of the system through better maintenance of the assets and improved productivity thereof, as well as of the man-power resources.